

March 27, 2004

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I am requesting that you modify the usage policy for the large athletic field at Ortega Park so that children and families in the neighborhood can get their fair share of access to that wonderful facility. Currently, that large field is overwhelmingly occupied by a very small number of cricket players. It is virtually closed to the general public for the **entire day** almost every Sunday from April through September, the most desirable months of the year for park usage. The actual 2003 field schedule shows 18 of 25 Sundays allocated to cricket. For those of us that work Monday through Friday, the weekends are the only possible days we can access the park. And since Saturdays are appropriately dedicated to youth activities, **the Sunday park exclusion eliminates 100% of our potential field access! THIS IS A MAJOR IMPACT.**

The Ortega athletic field is large; it has two full sized baseball fields.

One **SHORT** cricket game lasts **6 hours** (longer if breaks are included). If played at Ortega, it requires the **entire athletic field**. So currently, 22 players monopolize the field from 9AM until dusk to play one game. **That is an incredibly low average usage of 3 people per hour!** There is no sharing of the field during these games. There is no sharing all day long.

All other sports require **much less time than cricket**. For example, soccer is an hour and a half and baseball is 2 and a half hrs. And these sports use **only part of the field**. There is plenty of sharing during these games. Residents wanting a portion of the field can be accommodated **even while games are in progress!**

Cricket: SO MUCH PARK, SO FEW PEOPLE, SUCH A LONG TIME!

Neighborhood parks are primarily meant to be shared by residents, not monopolized by special interest groups. In the interest of fairness and sharing, let's modify the athletic field usage policy.

Please review the attached document for additional important details regarding this issue.

Recommendation:

Open a portion of the field to public use (non-permitted) from 12 PM to dusk every Sunday. For those periods, no full-field permits will be granted, no organized activity will consume more than one-half of the athletic field. **300 of my neighbors have signed a petition requesting this change.**

I hope we can work together to allow the neighborhood families back out to the field on Sundays for activities like flying kites, frisbee, playing "catch", baseball games, soccer games, and volleyball.

Please tell me what steps you will take to resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

Charles Clark, Jr.

DETAILS

The Problem

Ortega Park athletic field is closed on most Sundays. It is reserved for exclusive use by 22 cricket players (11 per team) for the entire day. Home team probably has less than half Sunnyvale residents. Visiting teams are from Fresno, Sacramento, Berkeley, etc. Average use: 3 PEOPLE PER HOUR! It is estimated that only 5 of those players are Sunnyvale residents. Average use: LESS THAN 1 SUNNYVALE RESIDENT PER HOUR!

Meanwhile, local residents must drive cars to other parks for recreation. Our kids are unable to walk to field and use it.

ALL OTHER SPORTS SHARE THE FIELD. Baseball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, etc. allow residents to simultaneously use parts of the field on Sundays (SHARING). Other sports do not monopolize the ENTIRE field the ENTIRE day (SHARING).

Grossly unfair, out of 25 prime Sundays (April-October):

- 18 Sundays - cricket club
- 3 Sundays - our Youth (organized softball, etc.)
- 4 Sundays - open to residents

During the winter months (November through March), permits are not allowed in order to protect the fields during the wet season. So, of the "permissible" months, almost all the Sundays are given to the cricket club!

Results of Petition

Overwhelming agreement among Ortega Park area residents is that it is UNFAIR that cricket monopolizes the field. 300 signatures favor change to get public use at least 50% of the day on Sundays. Only 5 people did not sign since they either did not mind the cricket usage or did not want to anger a friend who plays cricket. About 20 people did not get involved because they don't get involved in anything. Fewer than 15 residents petitioned realized that only 22 players were monopolizing the entire field all day. The vast majority had the false impression that a cricket game is reasonably short in duration, like baseball.

Support from City Council Candidates

Last November, 7 of 8 city council candidates

heard our proposal and agreed that this seems to be an unfair situation. Ron Swegles (current council member) signed and Pete Richards agreed to sign. Virtually all others pledged to help resolve situation.

What Neighboring Cities are Doing

Spoke with neighboring cities and found that they refuse to give an entire athletic field for an entire weekend day to any cricket team because of THE IMPACT TO LOCAL RESIDENTS (San Jose, Santa Clara, Cupertino). They give highest priority to youth activities. And they strive for a balance. We have lost balance in Sunnyvale.

Residents with children want change

Residents with children see the unfairness of the situation. The one-square mile neighborhood surrounded by Fremont, Homestead, Wolfe, and Sunnyvale-Saratoga roads have only Ortega and Panama fields available without crossing MAJOR streets. Most parents prefer to keep their children away from busy streets and want to keep the open spaces available to children as much as possible.

Are Sunnyvale children a Priority after all?

Youth soccer teams travel to Morgan Hill to play soccer games every weekend during soccer seasons! Why don't the youth have priority at Sunnyvale parks? Sunnyvale says one thing and does another regarding youth priority. Our children do not have a voice in this matter.

Cricket club response to petition

The Sunnyvale Sun newspaper published an article in November in which the cricket club was asked about our proposal to share the field on Sundays. A club member and ex-president (who lives in Saratoga) responded: "SHARING IS NOT AN OPTION".

Sunnyvale Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting

Presented this situation to Parks and Recreation Commission (5 members of the community involved with Parks and Rec. issues) and discovered that the man chairing the meeting is a cricket fan who believes that we should give up our rights to Ortega Park because the cricket players have a hard time finding places to play their games! Of course they do; their demands are unreasonable. The commission decided not to take this issue as an agenda item, so the next stop for us is the city council. SO ALL OF US ARE FORCED TO GIVE UP OUR NEIGHBORHOOD FIELD SO THAT

Sunnyvale Grants Exclusive use of Athletic Field at Ortega Park to Cricket Club!

Citizens Excluded!

Summary of Problem

- almost EVERY SUNDAY
- ONE cricket game
- ALL DAY
- SAME 22 people
- monopolize HUGE field

Very low usage rate
while local
residents are
denied access!

$$\frac{22 \text{ players}}{8 \text{ hrs}} = 2.8 \text{ players / hr}$$

What other cities do.....

- they DO NOT ALLOW cricket teams to monopolize ANY facility. San Jose, Santa Clara, Cupertino.

Our petition...

- 300 residents signed petition demanding that Sunnyvale limit cricket to HALF DAY. 98% acceptance rate!
- 7 of 8 City Council candidates agree that situation appears to be unfair. Ron Swegles and Pete Richards agreed to sign the petition.

Cricket club response...

- to sharing the field, "SHARING IS NOT AN OPTION" (quote in Sunnyvale SUN newspaper)

Parks and Rec. response...

- Problem presented to Parks and Recreation Commission... they took

NO ACTION. Commissioner, Raymond Pole, is an admitted advocate of cricket; not concerned about unfairness of situation.

It's also the \$\$\$\$...

- Cricket pays \$150/day for entire field. Comparable space costs 4 TIMES as much at Twin Creeks where adult soccer, baseball, etc. clubs play! A SWEET DEAL!!!

The invasion continues...

- cricket players hold long practices on Saturdays and some weeknights and exclude local residents by "coning off" the entire field. Often NONE of the players are from Sunnyvale!

Next...

- get City Council involved

PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE VALLEY
WILL HAVE A PLACE TO PLAY CRICKET!!!!

Why does the city feel that they owe the cricket club a park at the expense of the residents of Ortega Park and Sunnyvale? The city has decided that the residents of Ortega Park are simply casualties in this matter. City officials live near other parks and don't have to deal with such a problem.

Concerns about ever increasing monopolization of Ortega fields by cricket activities to the exclusion of residents

Increasing number of incidents on non-Sundays in which local residents are being squeezed out of the athletic field. Since the concrete cricket slab is located in the middle of the field, other cricket teams from outside Sunnyvale are now descending on the field throughout the week and weekends. They cone-off the entire field and claim "first come, first served" and stay as long as they want (can be all day). This unfriendly attitude has led to several incidents that had to be resolved with the help of Sunnyvale Police. On a recent Saturday, a group of cricket players were asked if they had a permit to take the entire field, and they lied about having one. Then the police were called to verify the permit and it was discovered that no permit was issued and none of the players were from Sunnyvale!

Similar tensions existed at community tennis courts before the 1-hour limitations were imposed to force people to share the courts. Now those tensions are gone.

We expect more incidents like this and we expect to have to fight for our rights to the fields. What is not tolerated by other cities is becoming commonplace at Ortega Park. At this rate, we expect to have more reductions in available field usage for our families in the future.

"World renowned" cricket club

The so-called "world renowned" cricket club should rent space at Twin Creeks like other adult sports teams do (at 4 times the cost!). Instead they rip-off local residents by monopolizing our field. The cricket club has been taking advantage of the community by "coning-off" the field without permits and keeping residents out for as long as they please. When they see the cones, residents naturally assume that permits have been issued and politely go elsewhere. This trick has worked for years! The cricket club does not demonstrate world class behavior.

The BOTTOM LINE

Local residents have sacrificed... now want the field to be shared.

Open spaces are important to local families.

Stop cricket at noon; public access begins at noon.

Or, move cricket game to larger facility.